

Supported Employment

"The low rate of employment for adults with mental illnesses is alarming. People with mental illnesses have one of the lowest rates of employment of any group with disabilities - only about 1 in 3 is employed. The loss of productivity and human potential is costly to society and tragically unnecessary. High unemployment occurs despite surveys that show the majority of adults with serious mental illness want to work...."(The President's New Freedom Commission on Mental Health - *Achieving the Promise: Transforming Mental Health Care in America*.) The employment rates for those with serious mental illness in Indiana mirrors the national average of only 20%.

Purpose: Supported employment (SE) enables people with disabilities who have not to work and contribute to society. SE focuses on a person's abilities and provides the supports the individual needs to be successful on a long-term basis. It allows people experiencing disabilities, their families, businesses, and their communities to experience success. The partnership that SE has established between individuals experiencing disabilities and their communities is having a lasting impact on the way the public perceives people with disabilities. SE affords the public the opportunity to see the person for who they are rather than seeing the disability. (Association for Persons in Supported Employment)

Implementation: Supported employment services have been available in Indiana through the Community Mental Health Centers (CMHC) for over ten years. Supported Employment is considered an evidence-based practice by SAMSHA when all components of the model are included in the program.

An important component of SE is consultation with the consumer to assure there is clear understanding of the affect of employment on existing benefits the individual is receiving. A great assist to employment for individuals with disabilities was the creation of MEDWorks, a Medicaid program that allows people with disabilities to return to work and use Medicaid as a form of insurance with the consumer paying premium payments based on their income. Many providers are also exploring a Social Security Administration program called Ticket To Work in which SSA will pay the provider for individuals that return to work and are no longer receiving SSDI payments.

Activities within a supported employment program may include: employment skills training (such as how to fill out an application and how to interview for a job), job development by working with potential employers to identify jobs and assist the employer in understanding employees with mental illness, job coaching, and follow-along. Supported Employment is one of the key service components for Assertive Community Treatment programs. (The evidenced-based practice of Assertive Community Treatment is an intensive, multidisciplinary team-based community treatment model using home and community visits as the primary mode of intervention and integrating different aspects of treatment.) Each ACT team has an employment specialist as part of the team.

Target Outcomes:

- Competitive employment in an integrated setting with real benefits.
- Community integration.
- Increased number of Vocational Rehabilitation supported employment closures.
- Reduced treatment costs.

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